



Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo

*Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico, Artistico ed Etnoantropologico
e per il Polo Museale della città di Firenze*

Florence, 27 September 2013

PRESS RELEASE

Vasari Corridor hosts 127 20th century self-portraits from the Uffizi's reserve collection in a new layout

Cristina Acidini (Director General for the Historical, Artistic, Ethnic and Anthropological Heritage and Museum Network of the City of Florence), Antonio Natali (Director of the Uffizi Gallery) and Giovanna Giusti (Director of the Department of 19th Century Painting, Contemporary Art and Tapestries) **presented a new layout today comprising 127 self-portraits of Italian and foreign 20th century artists (including paintings, sculptures in stone, bronze and plastic, and photographic work) from the Uffizi Gallery's reserve collection, which have been hung in the final part of the *Vasari Corridor* close to the exit leading to the Boboli Gardens.**

This completely new section in the permanent display of the oldest *Self-portrait Collection* in the world brings the total number of works of art on show in the *Corridor* to 527. It also marks the conclusion of a project on which the Uffizi Gallery has been working for some time in its determination to bring out of its reserve collection for public display, a selection of the superb works that it has acquired over the past thirty years following the celebrations held to mark the gallery's four hundredth anniversary, which spawned two exhibitions (in 1981 and 1983), and its acquisition of the Raimondo Rezzonico Collection in 2005. These two events between them added over 600 new portraits of artists to the gallery's historical collection. The careful selection that space constraints have forced the gallery to make is based on the concept of maintaining continuity of display while focusing on quality and on the variety of technique that is such a characteristic feature of so much 20th century work.

"All the signals picked up to date both in Italy and abroad", writes Director General **Cristina Acidini**, "appear to confirm the exceptional, not to say unique, nature of the collection of self-portraits begun by Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici, and to reveal widespread interest in seeing as many of them as possible. Our pledge is to work in that direction both with temporary exhibitions and, as in this case, with permanent displays".

"As the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Uffizi as a gallery approached", adds Uffizi Gallery Director **Antonio Natali**, "the then Director Luciano Berti had the splendid idea of asking the most illustrious artists on the Italian and international scene to donate their self-portrait. Only a short time later over one hundred artists had responded to his appeal, adding illustrious names to the museum's already rich collection of artists' portraits (the oldest such collection in the world). There were admittedly a few unkind remarks, but they were mostly from artists whose portraits Berti hadn't asked for in the first place! Yet it seems to me that the new self-portraits that visitors will be able to admire in the *Corridor* as of today faithfully represent the overall quality of the most recent part of the collection. Having said that, however, we are planning a periodic rotation of the works on display in order to provide the most



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complete vision possible of the collection over time".

For her part, **Giovanna Giusti**, who was involved in the first person in the project for the *Corridor's* new layout, writes: "The selection was made, in conjunction with Antonio Natali, by myself and Rendel Simonti, who helped in the choice with his 'artist's eye and expertise', as well as with a great deal of patience, in what was a long and demanding task. We attempted to put together a panorama as representative of chronological sequence as it is of trends and manifestos, while at the same time paying heed to the quality of the works and the artists' techniques. In some cases, this has led us to display works of particular delicacy and fragility in terms of their technique and support, such as photographs, while a mobile hanging system has allowed us to consider the possibility of displaying them on a rotating basis".

The 127 additional self-portraits on display include paintings and sculptures by artists of the first importance, both Italian (Baccio Maria Bacci, De Chirico, Balla, Marino Marini, Vedova, Pistoletto, Paladino, Clemente, Paolini, and including a considerable number of artists whose work represents the most innovative trends in painting in the first half of the 20th century) and foreign (Böcklin, Denis, Chagall, Zorn, Siqueiros, Chagall, Raushenberg, Kusama, Fabre and many others). To their number we also need to add the 16 paintings which were already on display but which have now been hung further forward, in the final stretch of the *Vasari Corridor*.

The project was intended from the outset to offer a foretaste, in the final stretch of the Vasari Corridor, of a vast programme designed to bring the historical collection right up to the very beginning of the Corridor, thus making it possible to double (at the very least) the number of self-portraits currently on display, taking their overall number to 800/900.

Given that these works of art are particularly delicate in terms of their technique and materials, the new section will be organised on a rotating display basis for those works that require special attention. Thus a special mobile hanging system has been designed to facilitate replacements (and it will prove useful also in the event of loans).

In the final part of the new stretch, close to the area offering direct access to Palazzo Pitti, visitors will also be able to admire a selection of the gallery's most recent acquisitions, including a number of superb sculptural self-portraits.

The works have been labelled with a state-of-the-art running caption system providing concise details of the exhibit and of the artist, but easy to modify in the event of works being replaced or rotated. The system's innovative, experimental character can also serve as a model for the collection's future expansion.

The works of art selected, which were cleaned and restored by Daniele Rossi, are presented in detail in a journal-style publication – entitled *Gli Uffizi. Autoritratti del Novecento (The Uffizi. 20th Century Self-Portraits)* edited by Giovanna Giusti and published by Giunti – reflecting the style of the two highly popular publications produced for the 1981 and 1983 exhibitions of the self-portraits acquired for the gallery's four hundredth anniversary.

The entire operation has been curated by Giovanni Giusti, director of the Uffizi's Department for 19th Century and Contemporary Art, in conjunction with Uffizi Director Antonio Natali.

NB

At the web site of the Polo Museale of Florence ([link](#)) available the press release and many high and low definition images.



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FACTS AND FIGURES

- There were 400 *self-portraits* in the Vasari Corridor before the new additions.
- The new layout concerns a total of **143** *self-portraits*: **127** of these come from the Uffizi's reserve collection, while **16** were already on display in the Vasari Corridor but have now been moved further forward to its final stretch.
- As of today there will be **527** *self-portraits* on display in the Vasari Corridor.
- The Uffizi Gallery's collections currently comprise a total of **1,776** *self-portraits*.
- As of tomorrow – 28 September 2013 – the whole of the Vasari Corridor may once again be visited from one end to the other. Visits, by reservation only, can be booked by addressing an e-mail to vasariano@operallaboratori.com or by calling Firenze Musei on 055-290383 to agree on a time and date (though no visits are ever possible on a Monday, when the Uffizi is closed).

With the approval of the Director General
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